



# Historically Speaking

Volume 3, Number 5 May 2024

## The Egyptian Goddess - Ma'at

**T**he Egyptian gods and goddesses seem much more complex to me than the Greek deities. They take so many forms, often simultaneously. I have spent the last couple months reading and researching the Egyptian mythological system far beyond any knowledge I had coming into this new project - AMON. I have read three books and hundreds of webpages trying to get a handle on how I can properly represent the ancient Egyptian concepts of the deities, the events of creation and especially the complexity of ancient Egyptian magic (which still is manifest today.) That magic plays a major role in all of the ancient societal elements of the past (and some insist, still today.) Though I have 30,000 words written on AMON so far, I will now have to go back and infuse what I have learned into the story before I can continue it.

The principal characters are Amon and Maat, both of whom are named after Egyptian deities. Those deities stand just as much or even more so for idealized norms. This newsletter will focus on the goddess Maat or Ma'at.

### **Maat as a Ruler of Justice**

Ma'at was associated with the law in ancient Egypt. From the 5th dynasty (c. 2510-2370 BC) onwards, the Vizier responsible for justice was called the Priest of Maat and in later periods, judges wore images of her.

The 'Spirit of Maat' was embodied by the chief judge in charge of the Egyptian law courts. He had a dual role, serving as both a priest and working directly in the law courts and justice system. The "Priest of Ma'at" began court hearings whilst wearing the feather of Ma'at and all other court officials wore small golden images of the goddess as a sign of their judicial authority, also as a symbol that their judgement would be balanced and fair.

Priests drew the Feather of Ma'at on their tongues with green dye, so that the words they spoke were truth. The priest would rule on the earthly punishment according to the nature of the law that had been broken.

Punishments included imposing fines, corporal punishment and in extreme cases capital punishment. It was considered a crime against Ma'at if a person engaged in jealousy,



### **What's happening?**

I was able to get ...to teach books to the Washington Education Association Representative Assembly. It was a fun event and I sold several books.

This newsletter features Ma'at, the Egyptian goddess that is featured in my next novel - AMON. A future newsletter will feature Amun-Ra, after whom Amon is named. This book is requiring even more research than the previous books, and there is still so much more to do.

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- 23 I do the best I can
- 24 I communicate with compassion
- 25 I listen to opposing opinions
- 26 I create harmony
- 27 I invoke laughter
- 28 I am open to love in various forms
- 29 I am forgiving
- 30 I am kind
- 31 I act respectfully
- 32 I am accepting
- 33 I follow my inner guidance
- 34 I converse with awareness
- 35 I do good
- 36 I give blessings
- 37 I keep the waters pure
- 38 I speak with good intent

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## Volume 3, Number 4 May 2024

dishonesty, laziness, injustice, and ungratefulness. The guilty Egyptian was deemed to have violated the Spirit of Ma'at and give his face a further judgment in the Underworld during the ceremony of justification in the Hall of the Two Truths. The Spirit of Ma'at detailed in the wisdom literature contained practical guidance with examples and some rules applied in previous law cases. These kinds of instructional texts have been described as "Ma'at Literature".

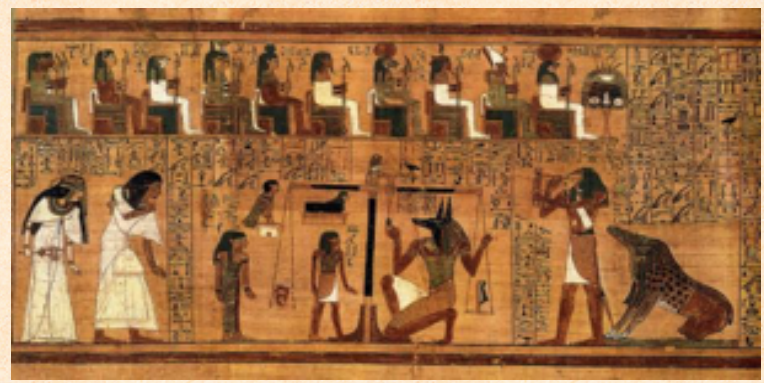
Ancient Egyptians worshipped many gods, one was certainly Ma'at, although Egyptian archaeologists now believe she was perhaps more of a concept or an ideal.

It's reasonable to assume her principles aided the people of Egypt in being better individuals and that she could be compared to the conscience of a person.

There was a small temple dedicated to Ma'at by Hatshepsut, the fifth pharaoh of the Eighteenth dynasty of Egypt, Egypt's first female pharaoh, at the Karnak temple complex in Luxor Egypt. Largely in ruins, it still preserves inscriptions of some of the viziers of Ramesses III and XI. A previous Ma'at temple existed in this area, indicated by reliefs and stelae belonging to the reign of Amenhotep III. The temple is inside the Precinct of Montu, the smallest of three enclosures at Ipet-Isut.

### Depictions of Ma'at

Ma'at is usually depicted in the form of a woman seated or standing with outstretched wings attached to both her arms. In other instances she is seen holding a scepter in



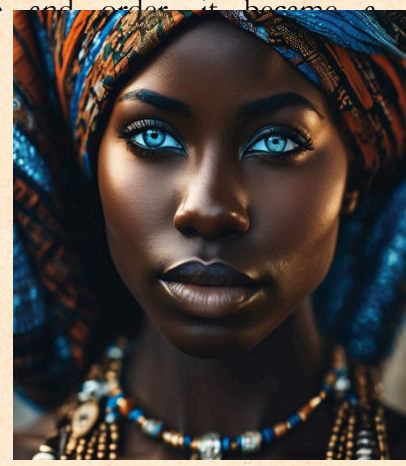
Above: Excerpt from the 'Book of the Dead', written on papyrus and showing the "Weighing of the Heart" using the feather of Maat as the measure for the counter-balance. Created by an unknown artist C.1300 BC (en.wikipedia.org)

one hand and an ankh (the symbol of life) in the other. Her statue was a stone platform depicting a stable foundation on which order was built. A common symbol associated with her is an ostrich feather, which she is almost always shown as wearing in her hair. Often, the Feather of Ma'at was a distinctive feature of her headdress.

Less frequently, images of the goddess showed her without a head, instead replaced by the feather. In other images the feather alone conveyed her presence. This feather has come to symbolize her being, as well as the representation of balance and order, it became a

### The 42 'laws' of Ma'at

- 1 I honor virtue
- 2 I benefit with gratitude
- 3 I am peaceful
- 4 I respect the property of others
- 5 I affirm that all life is sacred
- 6 I give offerings that are genuine
- 7 I live in truth
- 8 I regard all altars with respect
- 9 I speak with sincerity
- 10 I consume only my fair share
- 11 I offer words of good intent
- 12 I relate in peace
- 13 I honor animals with reverence
- 14 I can be trusted
- 15 I care for the earth
- 16 I keep my own council
- 17 I speak positively of others
- 18 I remain in balance with my emotions
- 19 I am trustful in my relationships
- 20 I hold purity in high esteem
- 21 I spread joy
- 22 I do the best I can
- 23 I communicate with compassion
- 24 I listen to opposing opinions
- 25 I create harmony
- 26 I invoke laughter
- 27 I am open to love in various forms
- 28 I am forgiving
- 29 I am kind
- 30 I act respectfully
- 31 I am accepting
- 32 I follow my inner guidance
- 33 I converse with awareness
- 34 I do good
- 35 I give blessings
- 36 I keep the waters pure
- 37 I speak with good intent
- 38 I praise the Goddess and the God
- 39 I am humble
- 40 I achieve with integrity
- 41 I advance through my own abilities
- 42 I embrace the All



A picture similar to this gave me the concept for my character Maat.



The Feather of Ma'at.